824
283 from a living, corky, African Baobab (Adansonia digitata), called "demma". Rope is also made from a tropical creeper of lower altitudes, called

324 "arägg", or of reed fibers. Thatching grass of excellent quality is obtained from a strong, tall reed called "fäla" which resembles papyrus and

293 grows on the shore of lakes. The "gecha" reed grows on the shore of rivers and is used to make the famous sun-umbrellas owned by every rural housewife, though once the privilege of kings and nobles.

372 Fuel - Charcoal for firing pottery and smithing is made from the big "amfar" tree. Now also from the eucalyptus tree, but in rural areas the umbrella tree; "grar" is preferred because it does not have to be paid for.

384 Dyestuff - the bark of the "wäyba" tree was used to make the yellow dye for the togas of monks, now only in the more remote, change-resisting monasteries (most others wear white).

222 Many other basic necessities for life and comfort are also obtained by collecting, by remembering where in the bush one has encountered the right kind or shape of plant, rather than planting and caring for it in gardens.

388 Soap - is obtained in rural areas from the crushed fruit of the "endod" bush (Discunia Abyssinica).

824
281 Tannin for tanning and curing hides - is obtained from the bark of the "beshesha" bush; from the

462 processing tasks of the women also include the prepara-
25 tion of staples of the pantry, to be ready for immediate use when her other tasks have left her no time. The red pepper ("barbarē") is preserved and readied in the form of a paste, by grinding it, adding water and salt, plus a bit of onion. This paste, called "dellehor "delleha" can then be used in wot, or to spice butter to be smeared on "enjera" bread, or mixed with oily nug paste and carried as a condiment and staple on travel. Another prepared spice condiment used by travellers is a dry mixture of spices, salt and "shero" (ground peas), called "meten". Butter may be processed by boiling it with pepper, or with the small yellow root of a rhubarb called "mēqmēqo" (Rumex abyssinicus), which is also used as a medicine against tuberculosis.

462 Fetching and producing materials for fuel is a major
237 female occupation, though left to young girls when avail-
572 able. A special supply of dried cowdung is prepared for the rainy season, beginning right after Easter when the intermittent light rains are expected soon. Donkey and horse manure, "fanday", are not used by the proud Amhhara, but cattle dung is flattened between the palms of women, dried in the sun, piled into tall heaps right next to the hut, then covered with a protective mask of mud and fresh dung. It is also women's task to watch the hearth fire in the evening, to check that it is covered with hot ashes over glowing embers, so that it will not go out and leave the hut chilly, on the one hand, but not burn so brightly that it might set fire to the hut.

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

373 Little clay oil lamps are a luxury, since the fuel, often kerosene, must be bought at the market. Only churches and landowning farmers can afford it on occasion. In the church, beeswax candles, made by the women auxiliaries of the church from cotton thread and beeswax, serve for illumination at the early masses, and are surprisingly non-dripping.

372 Modern matches, made in Ethiopia under a government monopoly, are how cheaply available at all great markets, and have replaced earlier methods of making fire. The old method is still folowed in remote jungle areas such as Wolqait. There, fire is produced by friction, using a big, soft, bottom piece of "wanza" or "gerawa wood", and a branch or piece of hardwood, such as wild olive ("woyra") as the twirling or rubbing top piece. It sometimes takes an hour of effort. Even in the hamlets, where matches are available, they are saved by transporting fire from hearth to hearth in a broken potsherd (gel). Charcoal ("käsäl") is a luxury item, used sparingly only in pottery-making, occasionally to boil coffee if in a hurry or tea in urban places.

462 252 Baking is a female occupation, but becomes a source of income only in urban centers or temporarily at great markets, where restorateur-prostitutes engage in this work or hire less attractive women to do it for them. A woman who specializes in baking and selling "enjära" and other breads is called a "gagari". It is one of the very few money-producing occupations in which a Coptic Amhara woman can engage. But it is low prestige, and no self-respecting

462 252 554

3: Buxton Y-5 (1946-1948)1949 MP5 Amhara MP5

of running water, and appeal to such *Dei ex machina* as marine action and waves of translation, cannot see a few such marks of the handiwork of rain and rivers as are shown by these gorges. There is not the slightest possibility, as far as I can see, of explaining their origin by any other force than that of the streams flowing in them. Any faulting or dislocation of the rocks is out of the question, there is no evidence of glacier action at any past time, and even the most fervent apostle of marine denudation would scarcely credit it with the formation of a Titanic trench three-quarters of a mile deep and very little more in breadth."

This description would apply equally to the gorges found in other parts of the Ethiopian highlands, for they are all, as far as I have seen, remarkably similar; and no geologist would now question their formation by stream erosion.

The formations of Blanford's area were called by him the Magdala group of "Traps"—an enormously thick, practically horizontal layer of lava flows. They were especially characterized by bands of trachyte, often columnar, weathering to form steep scarps. These formations are probably of late- or post-Cretaceous age, since Blanford's Ashangi Traps (upon which the Magdala group lies unconformably) were tentatively attributed by him to the Upper Cretaceous. Referring to the Magdala Traps Blanford says: "It is highly probable that the Trap rocks of Shoa belong, in part at least, to this group", his belief being based on some descriptions of Rocher d'Hericourt, who travelled in Shoa in the 1840's. My own limited observations confirm this assumption, except that in our area the most conspicuous cliffs and scarps consisted of columnar basalt, not trachyte. The area shown on the map consists of alternating harder and softer layers of volcanic rocks, including basalts, trachytes and tuffs (the latter often used, as in Kenya, for building). They dip slightly to the north-west.

The plateau, which occupies most of the sheet, lies everywhere above 9000 feet. It enjoys a temperate climate, and frosts are not uncommon in December and January. It is swept by easterly winds throughout the year, except when rain is actually threatened or falling, when it commonly turns right round to the west—a frequent occurrence during the long rainy season (June to September). The volcanic rocks have given rise to deep and potentially very fertile soils. The high plateau is mostly short grassland with very little bush, except in places protected both from wind and grazing animals, and very few trees except for small clumps of introduced Eucalyptus which mark almost every inhabited place. Owing to the scarcity of timber a dung-fuel known as *kubat* is usually burnt. At first sight the plateau appears very thinly populated but this, as will be shown, is an illusion. Anything like a village is rare, but isolated homesteads occur almost everywhere on rising ground. Nearly all this country makes good grazing for cattle, sheep and goats, and it is high enough for horses to flourish. Perhaps a third of it is more or less cultivable, though the area under cultivation in any one year is much less. Owing to cold and exposure very few crops flourish on the plateau itself, the principal ones being barley and broad beans.

The natural flora of the high plateau is not rich, though in rocky, sheltered spots a succession of attractive herbs and shrubs, including Jasmine, a yellow

8: Rey G-5 (1910-1920)1935
MP5 Amhara MP5

all together in their single room; if to the aroma arising from this combined population be added the acrid smoke from a fire made of dung-cakes, and a plentiful accompaniment of fleas and other insects, the joys of a night's shelter in such quarters may well be imagined.

The house nearly always stands in a very large piece of ground surrounded by a mud and stone wall. It is a curious habit of theirs that in building the wall they generally start with the gateway. Occasionally, for one reason or another, the wall-building suffers a hitch, and one sees the quaint spectacle of a gateway (sometimes with a gate), a few yards of wall, and then nothing to impede general ingress. Some of the chiefs, however, are now building themselves better places, especially those that have been on missions to Europe. But even among these an ordinary *tukul* sometimes suffices, and most of the important chiefs I met in Abyssinia were content with most primitive installations.

The *tukuls* of the poorer class are mostly constructed in a circular form of sticks plastered inside and out with mud. The roof, which is made separately and put on last, is cone-shaped, made of sticks or cane bound strongly together with strips of bark and then thatched: the latter is an art in which the Abyssinians particularly excel. The roof extends two or three feet from the walls; thus the torrential rains run off easily and leave the hut perfectly dry.

Inside, a part is usually divided off by a length of sheeting suspended on a string, behind which, on a raised platform, the family sleep on couches or beds made of wood and grass and covered with skins; blankets are uncommon, and the *chammas* in which

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

622 621 794 rounding a local church, and therefore "parish" may be the more appropriate term for it than village. The *chĭqā shum* and the local church authorities work closely on occasion, particularly in connection with the construction and maintenance of church buildings.

*565 79 182 The church represents the third main link between the peasant hamlet and the broader Abyssinian life. As the peasant depends on the local market to mediate between his production unit and the external economy, and on the *chĭqā shum* to mediate between his domestic polity and the higher political authorities, so he depends on the local clergy to mediate between his home culture and the "high culture" of Abyssinia as embodied in the institutions of the Orthodox Church.

The peasant supports the church by following its main ritual requirements and by contributing, according to his means, a certain quantity of grain each year. If the peasant works land owned by the church, a considerable part of his produce is transmitted automatically to individual priests, or gifts are offered to the church according to the occasion. In return, the church symbolizes for him the integrity of his moral order and provides moral support during personal crisis.

*565 Such, in broad outline, is the structural setting of peasant life among the Amhara.

THE WORLD OF ACTIVITY

*565 512 *The Daily Round*

[462] [252] Work begins in the peasant's home well before daybreak. His wife or maidservant rises with the first cockcrow to grind grain. It is pitch dark as she feels her way across the earthen floor and begins to push and pull a large flat stone over little heaps of barley, wheat, or *tĕff*.

An hour or two later cold light seeps in through cracks in the door and, if it is in bad repair, the thatched roof. The noises of chickens and livestock [782] become more audible, and the rest of the household begins to stir. The man of the house starts his day by reciting a prayer or, if he has some education, [231] [462] by reading a passage from some sacred text. Then he or one of the boys takes the oxen and cows out for breakfast, to a pile of hay in the yard or a spot of pasture rich with grass. Donkeys, mules, and perhaps horses are also sent to graze.

[372] One of the women pokes the embers that spent the night under a blanket of ash. She blows them into flame through a bamboo pipe, filling the room [262] [252] [352] [515] [264] with smoke and her eyes with tears. Over the fire she sets a clay pot to warm up leftover pepper sauce. The peasant sits on a sheepskin spread over the clay bench that adjoins the wall. Water is poured from a gourd for him to wash his hands, and *ĭnjarā* and sauce are brought for his breakfast. He eats by himself, slowly, pondering the work for the day.